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A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

by Dr Drennan

Cupio enim patriam noſtram omnibus quidem rebus augeri, maxime tamen civium numero ; id enim *firmiſſimum* ornamentum.

Dublin.

PRINTED BY JOHN KING, No. 2, WESTMORELAND-STREET.

1806.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH it may be wiſhed that the political hiſtory of theſe countries had given an early ſanction to nobler denominations of party diſtinction than thoſe of WHIG and TORY, yet I willingly recur to the uſe of theſe terms, at a time when principles much exaggerated, and paſſions much exaſperated, that ſought for new and opprobrious appellations, have ſunk to a cooler temperature; when the different powers and agencies of the Conſtitution, which, under an extraordinary impulſe from abroad, had flown off ſo widely from each other, are now imperceptibly returning, and converging about the central, ſocial, inſtinctive feeling of a common country, and a common danger. At this more auſpicious period, when men are no longer nicknamed out of their livelihood, nor the character of whole claſſes of ſociety put under the interdict of an epithet, coined and circulated by miniſterial authority; when public opinion begins once more to move within the orbit of the Conſtitution, it may be

 equally

equally prudent and patriotic to diſmiſs all eccentric phraſeology, the cauſe as well as effect of that ſtrange and unnatural ſtate which made people of the ſame maternal land, more hoſtile and implacable againſt each other, than againſt the common foe.

For true indeed it was, that, in this country particularly, ſuch miniſterial denunciations, ſuch privileged ſlander, and vulgar calling of names by men in high ſtation, contaminated and corrupted, as it deſcended through the different claſſes of ſociety. The Poddle, which ran through the Caſtle, overflowed in the city; the character of the Preſs was diſgraced; literary taſte became depraved; and as the manners of the people were degraded, their morality became infected; for manners are eſſentially connected with morals, being, in fact, but morals on the ſurface, the emanation of the underſtanding and the heart.

But under an adminiſtration, inſpired by a better genius, and, aſſuredly of a higher and nobler taſte, whoſe great object it is to bring back the Conſtitution to its virtue, and the Country to its good nature, I ſhall return to the uſe of homebred terms, which, if not dignified, are at leaſt familiar to our early aſſociations, and the habits of our hiſtory. I therefore beg permiſſion to addreſs this letter, as from and to an INDEPENDENT WHIG. I gratulate the empire, as one whoſe only party is that of the whole people, on your acceſſion to power. As one whoſe

whoſe tears have often dropt on that page of the Britiſh Story in which Ruſſell ſhed his blood, I gratulate this country, in particular, on the appointment of a true Whig to its chief government; whoſe illuſtrious family may truly be ſaid to have the cloſeſt conſanguinity with the Conſtitution; whoſe name in Ireland anticipates popularity, and is the herald of better fortune, reſtored order, and ſocial ſecurity. In this fair expectancy of the public mind, as in the ſweet and hopeful ſeaſon of the year, when this nobleman arrives upon our ſhore, I ſee the trodden down trefoil again ſhoot forth its leaf. I truſt he will not diſdain a *graſſy* crown, (if it be a civic one) the ſymbol of peace, of concord among a people, long divided and diſtracted, of ſalvation to the ſtate, and renewed ſtrength and rejuveneſcence to the Conſtitution.

Suffer me, Sir, to ſhow, in a ſingle inſtance, how much the good order of ſociety may be affected by an abuſe of terms, (more dangerous in politics than philoſophy) and a miſrepreſentation of motives; how man may be murdered by phraſes, and how little difference there ſometimes is between ſpeaking daggers, and uſing them.

The inhabitants of the NORTH of Ireland are a ſhrewd, inquiſitive, and intelligent people. They in general unite the occupations of ſmall, or rather petty farmers, with that of the linen (and of late years the cotton) manufacture, which, inſtead of being confined to towns, has, from its firſt eſtabliſh-

ment, been diffuſed over the country. In their character and mode of life are united the two great diviſions of human induſtry—that of manufacturers and cultivators of the ground. There are, it is certain, in the conſideration of political œconomy, many diſadvantages which reſult from this combination of employment, and the total maſs of uſeful and productive labour may be leſs, than where it is divided according to ſyſtem; but let it never be forgotten, (as there appears ſome danger of forgetting) that Man is a nobler product than manufacture; that the alternation of employment is healthful to the body, as well as animating to the mind; and that although the aggregate productiveneſs of the ſoil and loom may ſuffer, though the ſyſtem of agriculture appear execrable to the downward eyes of Arthur Young, and the hand of the workman may be, in a degree, ſpoiled by continual ſhifting from the ſhuttle to the ſpade, yet, in ſpite of political anatomiſts, I think the melioration of the human head and heart a truer policy than to identify man with the machine, and to calculate upon the utmoſt effort of the human muſcle, as upon the wear and tear of a ſpindle. The beſt product of man is his children; and better is it to have ruddy, healthy children, baſking under the bleſſed ſun, than to hire them out, when juſt beginning to taſte the ſweets of exiſtence, with the bloſſom on their cheeks, for the purpoſe of ſpending their days in grinding ſciſſars, or their nights (their *nights*) in ſpinning cotton: until the mercy of an Act of Parliament interpoſed between the miſerable progeny,

and

and the cruelty and avarice of parents, thus, in ſome degree, atoning for that voracious demand and exaction of labour, which, in the preſent machinery of ſociety, extinguiſhes natural feelings, and dries up even kindred affections. True, all is the gift of induſtry; and the beſt gift of God to man, is the neceſſity of labour: but there is a labour which oppreſſes and overwhelms, blaſts the bloſſom of life, ſtimulates beyond ſtrength, brings on premature decrepitude, and produces a morbid multiplication, that lives but to be ſwept away periodically by contagious diſeaſes, and moral degeneracy.

I therefore confeſs, that as a man, and a countryman, I wiſh (in contradiction to many) that the inhabitants of the North may ſtill, *jealouſly*, maintain that mixed occupation, which gives them a double anchorage upon life, makes them appertain more to nature, which blends the ſimplicity and independence of the ploughman, with the inquiſitiveneſs, acuteneſs, and enterprize of the artizan; keeps man in view, as the ſtaple manufacture, and the well-being and good condition of the lower orders, as the true ſtamen of the ſtate.

But to the advantages reſulting from theſe habits of the northern character which *unite huſbandry with manufacture*, may, I think, in no ſmall degree, be referred that general adherence to *Whig* principles of government, which have long taken root, and flouriſhed in that part of the kingdom. Theſe petty farmers

farmers are, at the ſame time, weavers of linen, which they bring on market days into the towns, the centres of news and information, where they aſſociate with the ſuperior order, conſiſting of buyers and bleachers, in converſation, in the news of the day, and in a ſort of equalized community, which enlarges the minds, and ſharpens the intelligence of the lower people. In fact, the compoſition of ſociety in the North is better aſſimilated; public opinion has a more free and cheerful circulation; the double means of livelihood gives a check to the double deſpotiſm that the landlord too often exerts over the mind as well as body; and in the perſonal character of the people, as in the Conſtitution which they once venerated, there is a protecting balance, a ſhield for the privilege of thought, and a palladium of private opinion upon public meaſures.

This independence of thought (our firſt and moſt ſacred property) is ſtrengthened and confirmed by the religious tenets moſt general in that part of the kingdom. They are in general proteſtant diſſenters; and this *reformed preſbyterianiſm* is ſupported upon two pillars—the inalienable right of private judgment, and an inflexible reſiſtance to ſpiritual authority in matters of religion between God and man. The unity of the church is with them, not nearly a matter of ſuch moment as a convinced underſtanding and a ſatisfied conſcience; and ſchiſm, elſewhere ſo terrible, appears only that natural and juſtifiable ſeparation, which takes place upon difference

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of opinion in points of prime importance. To promote the unity of the ſpirit by any other means, direct or indirect, than the influence and ſupremacy of reaſon, they conceive not to be "the bond of peace," but the ſignal of diſcord, or of an enforced obedience and inward ſlavery, inconſiſtent with our fealty to the Author of our faith. Theſe principles, moſt oppoſite to political as well as religious perſecution, were general, even among thoſe who adhered to the doctrine of the church of Scotland, (a preſbyterian eſtabliſhment which makes uſe of the terms "ſinful and ungodly toleration") and ſuch principles naturally aſſociate with the Whig principles of government, which certainly lead to a diſtruſt of power in whatever hands it may be placed, and recognize a wakeful jealouſy of its encroachments as the beſt ſecurity for the rights of the people.

That the large increaſe of the royal bounty lately made to the proteſtant diſſenting clergy, was deſigned to leſſen this diſtruſt, and in its gradual operation, to *conciliate*, as it is called, the people, as well as their paſtors, I think extremely probable, from the circumſtances of the tranſaction, from the time, the manner, and the uſual conduct of the miniſter who adviſed the meaſure; but whatever tends in the remoteſt degree to the corruption of teachers, muſt prove the bane of truth, and eventually leſſen even their proper influence over the minds of the laity. Independence and ſtate-hire in religion, can never conſiſt long, or certainly together;

ther; and it is my firm conviction, that this ſtipendiary maintenance of the diſſenting clergy can ſtand neither with the people's right, nor with Chriſtian liberty; but will, immediately or eventually, ſuſpend that church upon the ſtate, and turn her miniſters into ſtate penſioners. Eſteem, reſpect, and veneration for individuals, rather prompt than repreſs my opinion of this as a *public* meaſure, that theſe augmentations of bounty from the Crown, apparently to ſerve political purpoſes, is a ſlow poiſon poured into the proteſtant diſſenting church.* Let there be conciliation in every way but in the ways of corruption. You, Sir, have not ſcrupled, as a miniſter of ſtate, to pronounce the means by which the Union was accompliſhed—moſt diſgraceful; but I aſk, may not the means *ſurvive the meaſure?* and does not your own declaration prove *proſpective* ſo far as to diſcountenance and diſcourage a ſyſtem of ſecret influence

* Voyez-vous ce modeſte et pieux preſbytere?
La vit l'homme de Dieu, dont le ſaint miniſtere,
Du peuple réuni preſente au ciel les vœux,
Ouvre ſur le hameau tous les treſors des cieux,
Soulage le malheur, conſacre l'hyménée,
Benit et les moiſſons, et les fruits de l'année:
Enſeinre la vertu, recoit l'homme au berceau,
Le conduit dans le vie, et le ſuit au tombeau.
Je ne choiſerai point pour cet emploi ſublime,
Cet avide intrigant que l'interet anime;
Severe pour autrui, pour lui meme indulgent;
Qui pour un vil profit quitte un temple indigent,
Degrade par ſon ton la chaire paſtorale,
Et ſur l'eſprit du jour compoſe ſa morale.

De Lille.

fluence of which this is but a portion, to drag this "invifible and creeping" union into the light, that you may put your foot upon it, and to join the hands and hearts of the two Countries in the only durable union—that of love and loyalty, with honeſty and honour; not the union merely of the bigotry of ſects, and the prejudices of political parties.

But let me proceed to remark, that without going back to the brighteſt epochas of Britiſh hiſtory, which are merely periodical manifeſtations of Whig principles of government; without recurring to the æra of the revolution, which ſanctioned, and, as it were, eſtabliſhed them; without reverting to times when the vindication of theſe principles brought illuſtrious patriots to the block; or to times ſtill later, when they brought the Houſe of Brunſwick to the Throne, I have only to ſay, that during almoſt the whole of this reign, the ſentiments of the North were in oppoſition to the different adminiſtrations of government—to the miniſtry of Lord Bute, as it trenched on the civil liberty of the ſubject, and to the total adminiſtration of Lord North, as it trenched on the political liberty of our fellow-ſubjects in America, poſſeſſed of the ſame rights as ourſelves, with this only difference, that they were acroſs an ocean, and we were acroſs a channel. The intercourſe of a paſſenger trade, carried on for half a century, between the North of Ireland and America, created a political as well as real relationſhip between them, and the *origin*, *progreſs* and *event* of the

American war, entered into and continued by a Tory adminiſtration, was another great cauſe of confirming the attachment of the North to Whig principles, but at the ſame time, firſt created and diffuſed a belief, that the Conſtitution as renovated at the revolution and acceſſion, had again ſhifted from its foundation, and that it could be brought back and placed on the ſolid pedeſtal of public opinion, by no other means ſo effectual as by giving more influence and ſway to that opinion in a reform of the repreſentation of the people in the Commons Houſe of Parliament. This parliamentary reform became, and continued to be, *long*, *very long*, the limit of their deſires and the Ithaca of their wiſhes. It was a popular deſire, foſtered and ſanctioned by every real, and every pretended patriot during a long courſe of years. With Grattan (January, 1793) the whole people of the North concurred, that "the radical cure of public grievances is a free and independent Parliament choſen by the people, that great queſtion to which we all are attentive, and moſt of us PLEDGED:" *That* meaſure of abſolute neceſſity, which, if reſiſted in one ſhape, will be returned in twenty, until at laſt this great point be achieved for the Country (February, 1793). "The diſunion of the people ariſes from this. The people are not repreſented; and to reſtore the Union, you muſt have the people reſtored to a fair repreſentation—in other words, by a radical reform of the Commons." (Curran, 1793.) You ſee, Sir, it is my aim to prove, that frequent diſappointments in this moſt favourite meaſure, bred at laſt a diſtaſte to the Conſtitution

ſtitution itſelf; and above all, that the defection of popular leaders, and at laſt whoſe claſſes, from the cauſe of the people, was the *primary* cauſe of civil diſcord and general diſaffection.

The *Volunteer inſtitution*, ſo popular in its formation and progreſs, the complete ſucceſs of this energetic eſtabliſhment againſt the deſign at that time certainly meditated by the common enemy, and its partial ſucceſs in promoting a parliamentary reform in Ireland as a ſecurity for its rightful legiſlative independence; the high hopes to which it raiſed the heart, as it added inches to the ſtature, and the bitter diſappointments which the people at that time experienced in what they conſidered as a deſertion of public men, and a conſequent defeat of patriotic meaſures, had the effect of ſouring the popular mind, with reſpect to confidence in the higher rank, who cultivated, as placemen, the bleſſings of peace, and became practical Tories, although ſtill Whigs over the bottle.

In the *conteſted elections* through the North, the political logic of the people had been rendered more ſharp and acute. The paſſion and enthuſiaſm of party was added to the conviction of public principle; and ſo general was the diſtruſt of delegated power, at this time, that teſts were frequently propoſed to candidates as a means of keeping them in remembrance of their truſt. Even theſe were found fruitleſs; and no particular event was the cauſe of greater irritaion, and more deeply graved in memo-

ry, than the defection of a young man of a much loved Whig family, whofe election had been gained by the indefatigable exertion and activity of popular agents, but who, fhortly after, threw off his coat of patriotifm, ftammered into an orator, and then became the heaven-born fatellite to an heaven-born minifter. His ambition certainly cannot be gratified in the way which Flood mentioned as the higheft hope of our Secretaries in general—to be forgotten by thofe they leave behind them—for his name is immortalized as an Irifhman, in and by the degradation and extinction of his Country.

It was at this period when the exafperation and difappointment of the public in their fondeft attachments, in their moft favourite wifhes, was great and general—when confidence in political character was nearly loft, and men began to confound the nature of the government with the errors of its mal-adminiftration—when a general doubt had diffufed itfelf of there remaining any felf-correcting power, or recuperative energy in the Conftitution; it was, at this period, when the heart grew fick with hope fo long and fo often deferred, that a revolution took place in France, whofe impreffion on the popular mind was in proportion to its magnitude, its proximity, and the *exifting circumftances* of the country; circumftances created, as I think, folely by the continued errors, fhall I add crimes, of a Tory adminiftration.

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The revolution in France!—How did it, at its origin, gladden every thing that was great and generous in human nature! How it expanded and enriched the imagination; how it warmed and dilated the heart!—The hiſtorian, placed at a proper diſtance from the diſaſtrous picture of the preſent times, to *judge* them without partiality, will decide whether a premature and unfounded alarm was not, at this early period, deſignedly raiſed and propagated about the ſafety of the Conſtitution; whether a change of government in France, the introduction of a Directory, or the formation of a new Dynaſty would have affected the Britiſh Conſtitution, *well adminiſtered*, more than our revolution of 1788 affected the government at that time exiſting in France; and whether the meaſures adopted did not increaſe the motion and momentum of the revolutionary wheel, till it caught fire and communicated conflagration. I peep into the crater of the French revolution only to aſſert my belief, that a Whig miniſtry would not ſo ſoon have grown jealous, or quickly paſſed from unfounded alarm into active hoſtility, the effect of which was to render confuſion worſe confounded, (while the cornucopian eloquence of Burke became the trumpet of war) then to organize anarchy, to accelerate internal change without diminiſhing, but rather increaſing the hoſtile power, till that country has been converted into a Campus Martius, and its government, *forced* through all forms and phaſes, has ended at laſt in a military deſpotiſm, it is to be feared, *with the will of the people*, and ſupported by their conſolidated power. Thus, ſtate revolutions, which

which (as that of Rome in ancient hiſtory) occupied ſo many generations, have here taken place in as many years; and God grant that the potent indefatigable *Unit* who has ſcattered unto duſt the coalitions abroad, may find a more effectual reſiſtance in a miniſtry and a people, that now coaleſce at home in ſpirit and in truth, for Conſtitution and Country; a reſiſtance more effectual than can be forecaſted from the ſeemingly ſtrange expedient of a *Military* Council over a Commander in Chief. In the multitude of counſellors there may be that *ſafety* to perſonal character which reſults from a divided reſponſibility; but, as in medical conſultations, it is the parent, in general, of an inert and impotent practice.

My purpoſe, at preſent, is only to obſerve, that in conſequence of the French revolution, or rather, in truth, of the panic artificially raiſed by a Tory adminiſtration, and moſt induſtriouſly propagated; a ſecond *defection* now took place from the people, or what was the ſame thing, their favourite object; and this not merely a defection of their accuſtomed leaders, but of whole claſſes of men; the whole propertied community, as it was called, ſet itſelf in a party hoſtility againſt the maſs of the inhabitants. Even our approved patriots in Parliament became at firſt planet-ſtruck, and then ſtood apart from the Country in a ſullen and jealous ſequeſtration, which operated, at leaſt *indirectly*, as a cauſe of thoſe aſſociations that originated from nothing but diſappoint-

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ed love, and the forlorn hopes of an abandoned and jilted people.

For, the firſt conſequence of this defection was the adoption of a *new* ſet of popular leaders, from the middling ranks, and not far removed from the people, in their habits and manner of life; men who had been active and perſevering agents at elections, and who, now, by doubling their zeal and activity, wiſhed to render themſelves worthy not only of the confidence of their neighbours, but of their countrymen at large. It was chiefly by the agency, by the good ſenſe, and liberality of theſe men, that ſeveral years before, during the popularity of the volunteer inſtitution, a conqueſt was made of religious antipathies long prevalent among the preſbyterians of the North, and a correſpondence entered into with their catholic countrymen, on the footing of a common country and a common right to its civil and political bleſſings. Men differ in their features, but the conſtitution of the human heart is more nearly the ſame, and the general character of mankind is leſs influenced by the excellencies of religion, or injured by its abuſes, than the mutual crimination of ſects would lead us to imagine.

This union of the diſſenters with the catholics againſt the political dominancy of any religious perſuaſion, and in favour of a parliamentary reform, originated, ſolely and ſimply, from an endeavour to ſtrengthen the failing cauſe of the people

ple by an addition of *numbers*, to balance, in ſome degree, the loſs ſuſtained by the defection of men of popularity, by the panic of men of property, and by the religious prejudices and antipathies ſtill prevalent among a reſpectable portion of the proteſtant diſſenters. It was an aſſociation of this kind, which had been firſt ſpeculated upon by the enlightened volunteers, but was, at this period, put into practice through the agency of the *new* leaders of the people. This political union of the two deſcriptions of religion was cemented and conſolidated by a teſt (the primary teſt of the Aſſociation) which the perſon who drew it up can declare, in the ſight of God, and of his beſt repreſentative on earth—an honeſt man! was done with the moſt pure, patriotic, and philanthropic intention; from a hope, that an obligation which had failed in binding repreſentatives, might ſucceed in regard to the Conſtituents; with the ſole deſign of binding them more firmly together, and of bracing them all to the purpoſes of the inſtitution. In ſhort, to embody the people in a ſolid conſiſtence of character and conduct, each to all, and all to their Country. "Affirmabant autem (Chriſtiani ſc.) hanc fuiſſe ſummam vel culpæ ſuæ vel erroris, ſe ſacramento, non in ſcelus aliquod obſtringere, ſed ne fidem fallerent, ne depoſitum appellati, abnegarent." Pliny to Trajan. "Sine auctore, vero, propoſiti libelli nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et *peſſimi exempli* nec *noſtri ſeculi* eſt." Trajan to Pliny.

But

But the Tory adminiſtration then adopted a very different rule from that of the clement Trajan, and the prudent Pliny. The ſettled plan and ſyſtem was to take advantage of the panic diffuſed through the upper ranks, in order to make them cling to the government, and to depreciate and degrade the lower ranks, ſtill lower by opprobrious and contumelious language, who by this means were in reality halloo'd and hunted out of the Conſtitution into the wilderneſs of natural rights. This ſyſtem of vituperation was organized. Every epithet that could be raked from the kennel, was adopted by the political ALVA of that day, and was re-echoed through all the claſſes of venality. The character of the country, its manners, and its morals (for the maſs is ſtill the country) lay proſtrate under ſuch potent calumniators. "Nihil tam populare erat, quam odium popularium." The ſpeedieſt way to puſh or to make a fortune in every profeſſion, was, to join and follow in the cry. The verieſt hireling of the preſs, the loweſt cur of office, deemed himſelf a choſen guardian of the ſtate, and the argus of the Conſtitution. Even thoſe whom the people of the North had been accuſtomed to look up to in Parliament, as an aſylum and refuge from the fury of the miniſter, now bitterly reviled them; and there might be frequently obſerved a ſtrange and monſtrous conjunction of G—tt—n in Parliament, and G—ff—d at the Preſs.

What was the conſequence of all this? The new popular leaders, left in this ſtate of aban-

donment, deſerted by the whole propertied claſs, driven out, and expoſed as the refuſe and ſcum of the earth; mob, ſwine, ſturdy beggars, of no value in the eye of God, of no eſtimation in the ſight of man, abuſed by all profeſſions, and denounced by all parties, they were of neceſſity driven ſtill more *downward* in ſociety, and compelled to recruit and reinforce their ſtrength, by increaſing their numerical, or what was called their phyſical force. A civil war began from that moment. The diſruption of ſociety was complete. The battery of penal bills was opened upon the aſſociations. Their military organization took place, and a conflict began, ſimilar in its previous ſteps (but far different in the event) to what had happened on the continent of America.

But let me ſtop—and would to God, that with this drop of ink I could obliterate the enſanguined page of Iriſh hiſtory which ſucceeded, and blot it for ever from the memory of my countrymen. My only purpoſe is to ſhow, in a ſingle inſtance, and as cooly as I can, that the primary cauſe of diſaffection in the North, and the ſubſequent events, was the PRACTICAL DEVELOPEMENT of a TORY PRINCIPLE which actuated the adminiſtration of Government, and which was propagated with ſucceſs through all the upper claſſes of ſociety; a principle that not only rejects with ridicule the notion of the people being a ſupreme and ultimate power, as irregular and unconſtitutional, but conſiders the excluſion of the great maſs of the people

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as a vital principle of the Britiſh Conſtitution, and acts under the conſtant influence of that party conſideration. All I meant to ſhew was, that the violence of this *party* government, by its furious denunciations and inquiſitionary meaſures, drove the faſt friends of reform, from a hopeleſſneſs of all redreſs in the ways of the Conſtitution, to an eſtrangement and alienation from that Conſtitution; and that a continuance of the ſame regimen, patronized and ſanctioned by the example of the upper orders, produced at length a ſimilar alteration in the multitudinous claſs, made the leaders of that claſs deſperate, and in the end, impelled them to foreign intrigue, and their followers into a rebellion. Every queſtion of reform was termed ſedition; all concerted purſuit of it, conſpiracy; all recurrence to firſt principles in government, jacobinical philoſophy, until the abuſe of terms wrought the very evil it affected to deprecate, and the diſaſtrous conſequences of which all the people of Ireland have ſuch reaſon to deplore, both as individuals, and as a political community.

Sir, the Tory principle in the adminiſtration of Government, has ever been found, in ſpirit and practice, a principle of excluſion; and it is this excluſive ſyſtem, adopted and followed up during the late adminiſtration, which, among its other fatal effects, has ſo often overſhadowed the empire with a periodical viſitation of the Catholic queſtion. It is, I preſume to ſay, the conſtant recurrence of this ſtate queſtion which revives painful recollections, bitter animoſities, and ſevers the unity of the empire. It

is by this means that the Catholics of Ireland, inſtead of merging and melting in the maſs, are converted into a ſtrong political party. It is the excluſive ſyſtem which embodies that party; and the æra of their emancipation and aſſimilation to the Britiſh Conſtitution would, in my mind, be the date of their decline in political importance. It would ſink them to their natural political level, and juſt rank of eſtimation; while at preſent they form a power rather ſiniſtrous in its influence; extrinſic to the Conſtitution, though near the heart of the empire, an imperium in imperio—that appoints its commiſſioners; carries on its proviſional, or conditional treaties with the executive; and is, in ſhort, a public *Body*, which, until it be made free of the Britiſh Conſtitution, muſt ever be actuated as all bodies, public or perſonal, are, by a *ſelfiſh* ſpirit; that is to ſay, a natural, I may ſay inſtinctive diſpoſition to its *own intereſt* excluſively.

We do not ſee, and under ſuch circumſtances and ſituation, we ſhall never ſee the real and natural character of the great majority of the Iriſh people. They have been, in fact, compelled to an ambiguous line of conduct which muſt always generate ſuſpicion. They have been forced to ſhift from one quarter to another for aſſiſtance in their juſt pretenſions, and thus a ſuperinduced and impoſed character is taken up by their enemies, and ſometimes by their friends, and reaſoned upon as their real one. It is, I think, the excluſive ſyſtem which in a great degree has formed their character; and then this character

character is conſtantly brought forward to defend a continuance of the ſyſtem. And in this kind of reaſoning and of ruling may a people be led or driven round, from generation to generation, and from age to age, without one progreſſive ſtep in public uſefulneſs, or public glory. Yet will it be ſaid and ſworn by the ſophiſtry of the day, that they move forward, and, if hoodwinked from the ſight of all relative objects, they will themſelves think they do ſo, —but it is no ſuch thing.

Until the ſympathies of the human heart be more cultivated than its antipathies, the real character of the Iriſh will not develope itſelf—its warm ſenſibilities, its ſtrong attachments, its ancient and perſevering loyalty. The hiſtory of Ireland, which, in fact, is nothing but the hiſtory of an excluſive ſyſtem, has fully illuſtrated the folly, the criminality, and the total inefficacy of a penal policy in converting the mind of the people.

True indeed it is, that the Catholics have alſo their excluſive ſyſtem; and a nobleman, whom I ſincerely believe to be a good man, but whom flattery itſelf would feel aſhamed to call a great one, has, with juſtice, reprobated the Catholic church for its doctrine of excluſive ſalvation, as if this doctrine was peculiar to the Church of Rome. Alas! for humanity—every church, every religious corporation, profeſſes the ſame monopoly of heaven; and he who kneels with the proſtration of the heart before his Maker, riſes with the ſpirit of a privileged order,

and

and proudly repels from the congregation of the faithful, a brother, a Chriſtian man, who bears a different ſub-denomination.

But what is the catholic excluſive *doctrine*, when compared with the proteſtant excluſive *practice?* If the Catholics, in their ſpeculative tenets, attempt to exclude all but thoſe of their own communion from all place in heaven, do not the Proteſtants exert a much more effectual power, in excluding from all places of honour and emolument on earth? Which has the worſt effect on the general weal? The ſyſtem of ſpeculative and religious, or that of practical and political excluſion? That which is taught in the homilies and formularies of the church, or that which has been put in practice by the penal laws of the ſtate? Which ſyſtem, in ſhort, moſt ſtrikingly violates Chriſtian charity—the dogma of ſpiritual excommunication common to all churches, (the church of Scotland as well as of Rome) or the political, centennial incapacitation of a whole people, from places of public truſt in their country, for a ſteady adherence to the creed of their forefathers?

I was about to obſerve, that the prejudices in Great Britain, on the ſubject of Catholic emancipation, will *never* have a chance of being diſpelled, but by a calm and intrepid reſolution of the Catholic body, to bring a Petition, in itſelf the ſtrongeſt proof of loyalty, from *time* to *time*, before the bar of reaſon, and the ſhrine of political juſtice, not through the chambers of office, but through the portal

portal of Parliament, and under the political eye of all Europe.

Prejudices on this ſubject are the ſtrongeſt in Great Britain, becauſe they are derived rather from hiſtory, than from real information: They are the prejudices of paſt centuries which now ariſe from the tomb: and the public mind is agitated, not ſo much by fears for the Conſtitution, as by the ancient terrors of the cradle. Where the Proteſtants are much the moſt numerous, there prejudice is ſtrongeſt; and I doubt not that any time an influence, much leſs than that of the former miniſter, could raiſe a ſpirit in Great Britain ſimilar to that of the famous Proteſtant Aſſociation; but in this Country where the relative proportion of Catholics is ſo *great*, prejudice, the offspring of ignorance, has been, in a greater degree, overcome, partly by the neceſſary colliſion of ſociety, and partly by that imperiſhable ſeed of union originally ſown by the liberal Northern Diſſenters.

It is only by frequent diſcuſſion, not in cloſe negociations, but under the eye of day, that natural prejudices will be *gradually* diſpelled, by an open, bold, reiterated, ſeſſional appeal to Parliament; and I am ſometimes inclined to think, that if Lord S. or Mr. S. with a national and natural impetuoſity, had ventured on a blunt, perhaps a rude queſtion to Mr. F. in what manner he himſelf would have acted were he placed in the Catholic ſituation, the man would have gotten the better of the miniſter, and he would have

have anſwered with characteriſtic candour and magnanimity—in the manner I thought moſt conſiſtent with my duty to my conſcience, my country, and my God, without looking *ſolely* to the *ſucceſs* or *miſcarriage* of the meaſure.

But the poſtponement of this great imperial queſtion, notwithſtanding the hopes naturally excited, leaves me only occaſion to obſerve, that there never was a more ſignal proof of full and generous confidence, placed by a public body in the character of an individual: there never was a more ſtriking example held out to future ſtateſmen, that honour and honeſty is ever their trueſt policy; nor a ſtronger reaſon, for preſerving in his Majeſty's immediate councils, that ineſtimable man who poſſeſſes, on the inſtant, an implicit confidence, which his predeceſſor, during a long courſe of years, with all appliances, and means to boot, was never once able to attain.

Much is promiſed, and more, doubtleſs, will be performed. Adminiſtration, in this country, will begin a newer *practice*. It will become not merely *lenient*, but endearing, parental, and protective; conciliating and comprehenſive, not churliſh and excluſive. Far from adopting the embittered tone and aſperity of perſonal character, it will rather ſympathiſe with the failings, and aſſimilate with the excellencies of the Iriſh people. Men will no longer become ferocious through the influence of fear, nor will it be deemed politic by the conſtant affectation of terror,

terror, to throw the nation into real convulſion. Character will no longer lye at the mercy of a word from a man in office, nor will individuals in conſequence of ſuch proſcription, be incarcerated *in* ſociety. The race of informers, which like Locuſta, the poiſoner of old, had been deemed " inter inſtrumenta regni," will periſh in infamy and famine. The priſon doors will be unbarred in virtue of an Act, which may well be denominated, The redeeming Angel of the Conſtitution, and, perhaps, in the ſpirit of a wiſe amneſty, not the leſs wiſe for copying the policy of the enemy, which wiſhes to conſolidate all its ſtrength, not to keep it diſperſed in the approaching day of battle, facilities will be opened for the pardon and return of *our* unfortunate emigrants, toſt and thrown off by the tempeſt of the times, but whoſe hopes are now fluttering around their dear native land, their " dulces argos," and who are ready to fight and die in its defence, againſt a treacherous foe.

Corporation monopoly will not be ſuffered to pale in, for private uſes, the bleſſings and the commonage of the Conſtitution. The *papiſtical* ſpirit of the Proteſtant Aſcendancy will be put out of countenance. The bench will grow leſs theological, and the pulpit leſs political. Adminiſtration will not merely aim at propitiating great bodies of men, in the exigent moment, by the ſacrifice of obnoxious individuals, and reconciling the general intereſt to an excluſion of hope, by putting other more popular perſons in their places. It will not be a mere hurry

and huſtle of the *thruſt-out* and *thruſt-in*. All political value and eſtimation will not be attached to an *ambitious* profeſſion, not better in conſtitutional knowledge, and often not ſo pure in practice, as men in other conditions of life. In all profeſſions there will be a given competition, nor will the *vermicular* progreſs of a Scotch faction, that worms itſelf into the beſt and moſt lucrative ſituations, be preferred and favoured, to the excluſion of the natives of the country.

A ſyſtem of corruption organized at the Union, but which has outlived the Union—a ſyſtem that goes under the modiſh term of *conciliation*, but at which Jugurtha himſelf would have turned pale, (if the Numidian could change colour) will not receive the ſanction of a Whig adminiſtration.

The PRESS will again take the public will for its guide, and the public good for its end; and the public prints turned, as they have been, into a ſickly pool which extinguiſhed every ſpark of literature, will become, as they ought to be, a palæſtra for the exerciſe of literary talent, and the wreſtle of rival minds. The export to England will not always be that of *waſte* paper. The Art of Printing will perhaps be again revived in Ireland. For the price of Britiſh books as they at preſent iſſue from the preſs in proud and ponderous quartos, with every embelliſhment that can recommend them to the *eye* of the reader, has again, in a great meaſure, introduced the misfortune of a manuſcript age, and locked up the

the products of literature as effectually from the generality, as before printing was invented, when works were written laboriously on vellum, repofited in monafteries, or chained down in college libraries. When a fpirit of refearch was dreaded as feditious, and philofophy itfelf was difcountenanced by minifters of the ftate, and dignitaries of the church, a fear of innovation fpread throughout the whole manfion of mind, and the truth was, that inquiry became lefs popular, even among the learned world, when it was not only difcountenanced but difcouraged among the vulgar: the emulative principle (in every art and fcience the true incitement to excellence) will now have liberty to develope itfelf, and a Free Prefs, will, it is hoped, advance the literature of Ireland, while it will tend to emancipate the minds, and remove the prejudices of the reft of the empire.

The condition of the lower people will be ameliorated, and they will be raifed to *a rank* in fociety. By what means has not yet been promulgated, but certainly the long neglected waſte of the public mind cannot be cultivated to advantage, but by a proper eſtabliſhment of parochial ſchools, or ſome equally extenſive plan of public inſtruction. Education is, in truth, the lyre of Orpheus, which gradually molliſies the furiouſneſs of uncivilized nature, and tames the tygers of the human breaſt. The late government of Ireland directed roads to be made into ſome of the mountainous and ſavage diſtricts of this iſland; but *with them*, it was a ſerious queſtion whe-

ther the common people of all perſuaſions ſhould receive the knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, which, like high roads, and internal navigation, in the cultivation of the ſoil, ſerve to create and communicate ſocial inclinations, to bring capacities into action, and to reclaim the ſavage nature into an immediate and marketable value. I truſt it will be the diſpoſition of our preſent government to ſoften and civilize the *riſing* generation, and to grant at leaſt as much money for the eſtabliſhment of parochial ſchools, particularly in the ſouth and weſt, as is annually voted to maintain the beggars of the Metropolis. If the Union of the two countries be made not merely for military and financial purpoſes, but for the love of the people, the mutual advantage of the different orders of the ſtates, the proſpects of peace, and the prevention of rebellion, there will be no farther procraſtination in attending to the direction of Lord Bacon, "That if you will have a tree bear more and better fruit than it uſed to do, it is not any thing you can do to the *boughs*, but it is the ſtirring of the earth and putting new mould about the *roots*, that muſt work it."

Not even legiſlative power can operate any ſudden change in the manners of the people; but let it now begin to make them at leaſt a public care; and no means appears more likely to effectuate this change than a well-digeſted ſyſtem of public inſtruction, liberated from incorporation charters and eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, which might remedy the perverſions of dioceſan and other ſchools of rich endowment,

and

and by facilitating to *all* the firſt rudiments of learning, (in themſelves ſo aſſociated with the firſt principles of honeſty, truth, and induſtry) might ſerve to multiply the early aſſociations of life, and give a new turn to that collection of perſonal habits, which conſtitutes national character.

The Metropolis, which was verging faſt into the ſtate of a great caravanſary for the accommodation of paſſengers to England, and its beſt houſes converted into hotels, will for ſome time at leaſt, be animated, and improved by the magnificence of the Court and the hoſpitality of the Caſtle. Agriculture is always ſure of protection and ſupport from the moſt diſtinguiſhed patron of the plough, and the finer arts will ſhoot forth, and perhaps will ripen, even on this deſerted ſoil, under the united influence of rank, beauty, and faſhion.

Much ſubject then there certainly is for hope, and yet theſe hopes are mixed with a fear. It is not merely a fear of the general inefficacy of a procraſtinating and temporizing policy with reſpect to the Catholics, and its peculiar hazard in times like the preſent. It is not merely a fear that an indefinite poſtponement of this queſtion, will, in its effects, rather tend to excite the inteſtine motion of that body, than to ſuſpend it; and that miniſterial conciliation, being in its nature partial and perſonal, will rather produce a diſquiet and diſſatisfaction, in the *generality*, which legiſlative redreſs, and *that only*, can for ever remove; for the Catholics embodied, as they

they now are, in a kind of ex-corporation, are as watchful to a common intereſt, as any individual to his own. Nor is it merely a fear that the *whole* of the preſent miniſtry may not have fully contemplated the magnitude and extent of the miſchief, which a ſyſtem of private and perſonal *paſſion* has introduced into the conſtitution of civil ſociety, in this part of the empire. How much this party principle of politico-religious preference and diſtinction, corrodes the minuteſt fibres of the ſocial organization as much as it paralyſes every grand purpoſe of public weal. How effectually it obſtructs all circulation of confidence and good neighbourhood. What pride and ſuſpicion it engenders in ſome breaſts—what jealouſy and hidden wrath it hoards up in others—what an ever-dropping poiſon falls from thence into the very boſom of ſociety, and what a poor defence in moſt caſes (particularly in parts remote from the eye and ear of Adminiſtration) their partial or perſonal favour will afford againſt a party powerful enough to put their own conſtruction on the ſpirit of the law.

The fear I allude to has a wider extent than the Catholic queſtion, and refers to the future fortune and fate of the whole empire—It is apprehended, I truſt without reaſon, that the *Tory* principles of Government are not only prevalent, but form the grand *predominating* principles, for a length of years paſt, throughout Great Britain, which for a time, and for a purpoſe, ſuffer, but will ſoon ſhift off the incumbrance of a Whig Adminiſtration. It is apprehended,

hended, that not merely in the late Adminiſtrations we can ſee the evil in its full extent, but that *they* have only been the means of cheriſhing, ſtrengthening and confirming prejudices, of which Catholic claims are only a mere touchſtone; prejudices not ſo much religious as *political*, which indicate a general ſyſtematic oppoſition in all the ſuperior claſſes of ſociety to change of any kind, under the invidious term of *innovation*—a term that as occaſion ſerves, or neceſſity urges, is to be denominated ſedition, democracy, jacobiniſm, conſpiracy, rebellion.

The ſentiment of education in the majority of its ſeminaries, is not ſuppoſed favourable to the zeal of future life in limiting the unjuſt influence of power. The old habits of country gentlemen or the landed intereſt, and the new habits of the mercantile or monied intereſt, are equally hoſtile to any the leaſt alteration in the eſtabliſhed order of things. Aſia, Africa, and the Weſt-Indies, have not much improved the morals, the manners, nor the politics of Great Britain. The literature of Scotland has not as yet awakened the ſpirit of political inquiry, or any wiſh for improvements in the Conſtitution. The early popularity of the American war, the long and fruitleſs oppoſition during almoſt the whole of this reign, until the late *unexpected*, and *accidental* change, which that very numerous ſet of men, who ſquare their principles and practice upon the ſuppoſed liking or diſinclination of an individual, are, at this moment, calculating will not be a change of

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any continuance; theſe, with other reaſons, ſeem to juſtify an apprehenſion, that the miniſter, who of all men poſſeſſes moſt the confidence of the people, will find it impracticable to redeem his pledge, and by doing ſo, to reſtore the Conſtitution to the people, and the people to the Conſtitution.

If theſe fears be founded, it then ſeems evident that the good intentions of the preſent adminiſtration can be rendered efficacious and ſucceſsful only through the medium of a WHIG Houſe of Commons, and that ſuch a Houſe of Commons can be attained and ſecured by, and only by a MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT. It is only by thus enlarging the Conſtitution at its baſe, ſpreading wide the feet of the imperial triangle, that the whole ſuperſtructure of the ſtate can be rendered firm and immoveable. It is only through the medium of a Parliamentary Reform, and the liberality of public reaſon which muſt prove its conſequence, that the Catholics of Ireland will ever work their way to a complete EMANCIPATION. If there is to be a public feeling raiſed, or an agitation of the public mind, let it be on a grand, public, comprehenſive, embracing, queſtion. It is only through the medium of a Reform in Parliament that the UNION can ever become popular in this Country, becauſe then its views will become impartial and patriotic; and when the ſyſtem of *Compenſation* begins to loſe its hold, there will be a great want of ſome purer and more durable principle to fix the attachment of Ireland. It is a Reform

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in Parliament which alone will be able to recal this attachment among the inhabitants of the North, to reclaim their wandering imaginations, and make all their affections once more cluſter around the name of COUNTRY—give a ſupreme intereſt in its welfare, and produce an array of hearts and hands in its defence. It is their duty now to come forward, no longer to preſerve a ſilence which may be conſtrued into indifference or diſaffection, but with the ſame alacrity as the Catholics on their *particular* queſtion, to declare in public meetings their conſtant attachment to the great meaſure of *national* redreſs, and their implicit confidence in Mr. Fox, that he will never forget it, but bring it forward *at the time* and *in the manner* moſt likely to give it ſucceſs. In ſhort, the military deſpotiſm of Napoleon can only be met by a rule as arbitrary and military as his own, or by a willing and warlike people, embodied and embattled by a common intereſt in a common country, and fighting under the Ægis of a free, impartial, and renovated Conſtitution.

Sir, an attachment to this grand principle of reform has long been the grace and glory of your political character. For 26 years, the ſilken thread of the ſame conſiſtent and *continuous* principle has been the glory even of an inſect life, and, through all its viciſſitudes, proved a ſweet and ſecret conſolation. "Tanta eſt edendi gloria fili." It is, ſolely, the boldneſs which a communion of faith in this grand article of our political redemption inſpires, and a

truſt in the condeſcenſion always found in the greateſt and beſt characters, which have prompted me to write to the Right Honourable Charles James Fox, and emboldened me to bring ſuch a name near to that of

WILLIAM DRENNAN.

Dublin, March 17, 1806.

Servetur ad imum
Qualis ab incepto proceſſerit, et *ſibi conſtet.*

FINIS.